

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The office action of April 6, 2006 has been carefully reviewed and these remarks are responsive thereto. Reconsideration and allowance of the instant application are respectfully requested. Claims 3-9, 12-18 and 21-27 remain pending in this application. Claims 1, 2, 10, 11, 19 and 20 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer.

Preliminarily, applicant wishes to thank Examiner Nguyen for the courtesies extended to the undersigned during the personal interview of June 28, 2006.

Applicant notes that the Office Action Summary only identifies claims 1-26 as being pending and rejected in the presented application. Applicant believes that reference to only 26 claims is an error as claims 1-27 are currently pending and claim 27 stands rejected in the Detailed Action.

Applicant has amended the specification to correct minor informalities discovered therein.

Claims 2, 7-11, 16, 19 and 25 have been objected to based on minor informalities. Applicant has amended the claims to address each of the informalities identified in the action. Accordingly, withdrawal of this objection is respectfully requested.

The claims stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of U.S. patent no. 5,969,897 to Morita in view of U.S. patent no. 4,363,049 to Ohtsuki et al. ("Ohtsuki") either alone or in combination with a further reference. Specifically:

- a. claims 1-3, 5-6, 10-12, 14-15, 19-21 and 23-24 stand rejected over this combination alone;
- b. claims 4, 13 and 22 stand rejected over this combination and further in view of U.S. patent no. 6,628,889 to Inoue;
- c. claims 9, 18 and 27 stand rejected over this combination and further in view of U.S. publication no. 2003/0134590 to Suda et al. ("Suda"); and
- d. claims 7-8, 16-17 and 25-26 stand rejected over this combination and further in view of U.S. patent no. 6,951,031 to Hatano.

Applicant has rewritten claims 7, 16 and 25 in independent form and added the features of previously dependent claims 2, 11, and 20, respectively. The remaining claims depend from one the respective independent claims.

As discussed during the interview, Hatano does not qualify as prior art to the instant invention. In particular, the section 102(e) date of Hatano is December 14, 2000 after the priority date of August 11, 2000 of the instant application, which under 35 USC § 119(e) corresponds to the filing date of provisional application no. 60/224,910. Also, applicants have substantially added the feature of prior claims 2, 11 and 20 to claims 7, 16 and 25, respectively to further clarify the differences between the art of record and the claims. As agreed in the interview, claims 7, 16 and 25 as amended distinguish over any combination of the art of record. Accordingly, applicant respectfully requests withdrawal of the rejection of independent claims 7, 16, and 25. Claims 3-6, 8 and 9, which depend from claim 7, claims 12-15, 17 and 18, which depend from claim 16, and claims 21-24, 26 and 27, which depend from claim 25, are allowable for at least the same reasons as their ultimate base claim, and further in view of the additional advantageous features recited therein.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that no fee is required for this submission. If any fees are required or if an overpayment is made, the Commissioner is authorized to debit or credit our Deposit Account No. 19-0733, accordingly.

All rejections having been addressed, applicant respectfully submits that the instant application is in condition for allowance, and respectfully solicits prompt notification of the same.

Respectfully submitted,
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